

**Mayor's column for
The Enterprise & The Beacon
For publication on 8/26 and 8/27/09**

There are some things that we often take for granted because they aren't a visible part of government. We use their services. We rely on them. But we never see them. Yet they are always there when we need them.

Our 911 call center, known as SnoCom, is an agency that is anonymous to most of you. I'm sure that few people even know where they set up shop. But when you dial 911 for help, they are there to answer your call and deliver police and fire to your door as quickly as possible.

Over three dozen employees work out of the center that serves mostly south Snohomish County cities. Specialized in areas such as call-taking and dispatching, these employees staff the center and field emergency calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are trained to ask the right questions of a caller to determine what emergency services to dispatch to the scene.

I have heard many times from citizens that they didn't want to call 911 because "it wasn't important." My advice has always been that if it's related to police or fire, call 911. The call takers will determine whether it's important or not.

Recently I re-thought that advice when I learned that people were calling 911 to report that wild bunnies were having difficulty crossing 196th Street without getting hit! That street is a busy one and bunnies should be crossing in a crosswalk! First of all, I was unaware of the wild bunny population in Edmonds and secondly, why was someone calling 911 to report it?

So I asked the call-takers for some other instances of "interesting" 911 calls so I could share them with you. I think my favorite is the caller who asked, "What's the number for 4-1-1?"

An officer responded to assist an elderly caller with her deceased cat. The officer only remained at the scene for a few moments before abruptly leaving. Apparently the cat woke up from its nap!

The holidays always bring out the best in 911 calls...At Thanksgiving there are the inevitable calls about how to cook a turkey. And seasonally, where is the Easter egg hunt? Uh, my husband is stuck in the chimney! The bar is serving moldy beer; it's green! And then on the Fourth of July, can you guess? "There are fireworks going off!" Followed six months later on New Year's Eve with, "There are fireworks going off!"

And finally on Halloween: "Kids keep coming to my door. I don't know them, so I'm not going to answer. When they leave, more kids come!"

So please continue to call 911 for police and fire business, but consider using Google for some of that other stuff!